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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by the United States Committee for United Nations Development Fund for Women, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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The United States Committee for United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM/USA) supports the innovative and catalytic work being done by UNIFEM to further gender equality and empower the women of the world by providing financial and technical assistance to programmes that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security. The United States Committee is one of 19 National Committees worldwide established to extend public awareness and increase financial contributions for the efforts of UNIFEM.

UNIFEM has provided particular leadership within the United Nations system and around the world in efforts to eradicate all forms of violence against women. In 1996, the General Assembly established the UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. Its purpose is to identify and support innovative projects aimed specifically at preventing and eliminating gender-based violence. This Trust Fund, administered by UNIFEM, has provided $7 million in grants in 73 countries for local initiatives against violence. However, in 2001 alone, there were more that 300 grant applications worth $15 million submitted to the Trust

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Fund, far more than the resources of the Fund. UNIFEM/USA urges States Members of the United Nations to increase their support for actions to eliminate violence against women by increasing their contributions to the Trust Fund.

Complementing the Trust Fund's grant-making activities, UNIFEM has created a learning component which analyses the lessons of the Trust Fund and allows grantees to document their work and tell their stories of efforts to end violence against women. UNIFEM has published a resource book, "Picturing a Life Free from Violence", which provides organizations with materials that can be adapted to cultural and country-specific content.

A further effort by UNIFEM has been regional advocacy campaigns to end violence against women. The focus of these initiatives is to promote strengthened legislation against gender-based violence.

UNIFEM has assisted Governments and NGOs to partner in strengthening the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, an important tool in promoting legal and policy frameworks to eliminate violence against women throughout the world. UNIFEM/USA is committed to advocacy efforts within the United States for ratification of the Convention.

UNIFEM/USA supports the multifaceted strategies and programmes of UNIFEM to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, emphasizing the need to address the violence aspects associated with the particular vulnerability of women and girls.

Trafficking is an egregious violation of human rights that places millions of women and girls worldwide in situations of abuse and exploitation. UNIFEM has focused its work on trafficking in South Asia by advocating for government recognition of this problem as a high national and regional priority. Trafficking in the United States is an issue of grave concern for UNIFEM/USA as the United States Government estimates that 50,000 individuals are trafficked annually.

The contributions of UNIFEM to protecting women and girls from violence in war and armed conflict are an integral part of its tireless efforts to promote the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) legitimizing a prominent place for women in decision-making in post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building.

In April 2001, UNIFEM appointed two independent experts to carry out a global assessment of the impact of armed conflict on women and women's role in peace-building. The independent experts listened to and learned from women on the ground and saw a continuum of violence against women before, during and after armed conflicts. They witnessed how during armed conflicts, the violence women face increases dramatically — in number, frequency and severity. The UNIFEM report, "Women, War and Peace" published on the second anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), also details the success women have had in organizing networks across borders, helping to prevent conflict and promoting the building of peace.

UNIFEM/USA congratulates UNIFEM on its steadfast commitment to advancing the status of women throughout the world and encourages more United Nations Member States to partner with UNIFEM to actualize gender equality and end violence against women.